

Message Text

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ACTION AGR-20

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TAGS: EAGR ETRD EG

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN WHEAT AND COTTON ACREAGES

UNCLASSIFIED

1. THE GOE HAS ANNOUNCED ITS PLANS FOR THE ACREAGES TO BE DEVOTED TO WHEAT AND COTTON FOR THE NEXT GROWING SEASON. THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, DR. MOHAMED ZAKY, GAVE THE FIGURES TO THE PRESS FOLLOWING A SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH THE VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND AUTHORITIES INVOLVED IN DETERMINING THE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF THE COUNTRY.

2. FOR WHEAT, THE TOTAL ACREAGE WILL BE 1.3 MILLION FEDDANS (1 FEDDAN EQUALS 1.038 ACRES), UP FROM THE 1.248 PLANNED FOR THE 1973/4 SEASON. MEXICAN VARIETIES, WHICH HAVE GIVEN GOOD RESULTS IN TERMS OF THEIR YIELDS, WILL BE CONCENTRATED IN THE LARGER LAND HOLDINGS WHERE THE NECESSARY EXPENSES FOR FERTILIZERS AND THEIR APPLICATIONS CAN MORE EASILY BE MET. SMALLER FARMERS WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO USE MEXICAN WHEAT, BUT WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO USE EGYPTIAN VARIETIES WHICH PRODUCE HIGHER YIELDS.

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3. IN THE CASE OF COTTON, 1.5 MILLION FEDDANS ARE PLANNED,
THE LOWEST FIGURES SINCE 1968, WHEN THE TOTAL ACREAGE WAS
1.4. IN 1973, 1.6 MILLION FEDDANS WERE DEVOTED TO COTTON
CULTIVATION.

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4. COMMENT - THERE IS ALWAYS SOME SLIPPAGE BETWEEN PLANNED
AND ACTUAL ACREAGE IN THE NORMAL COURSE OF EVENTS, COMPOUNDED
IN EGYPT BY THE RESISTANCE OF SOME FARMERS TO THE GOE'S
AGRICULTURAL POLICY DECISION. ON RECENT TRIP TO INVESTIGATE
THE COTTON WORK INFESTATION, OFFICIALS FROM THE MINISTRY OF
AGRICULTURE WERE SURPRISED TO FIND THAT THE COTTON ACREAGE
IN ONE REMOTE AREA WAS 10,000 FEDDANS LESS THAN HAD BEEN
PLANNED.

5. PART OF THE PROBLEM CAN BE TRACED TO TWO RELATED FACTS.
FIRSTLY, THE DOMESTIC PRICE FOR COTTON HAS NOT INCREASED AS
FAST, PROPORTIONALLY, AS THAT OF WHEAT, MAKING IT A LESS
ATTRACTIVECROP FOR THE FARMER IF OTHER ALTERNATIVES CAN
BE FOUND. SECONDLY, COTTON YIELD PER ACRE HAS BEEN DECLINING
OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, WHILE THAT OF WHEAT HAS BEEN
INCREASING, FURTHER ADDING TO THE DISINCENTIVES. THESE
FACTS WILL HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED AS EGYPT ATTEMPTS TO
BALANCE ITS EXPORT AND IMPORT PRIORITIES IN AGRICULTURAL
COMMODITIES.
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